

DEVISING METHODS FOR CLASSICAL PERFORMERS

A SYLLABUS TO FOSTER COLLABORATIVE PERFORMANCE

by

Reuben Walker

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Doctoral Committee

Katherine Strand, Research Director

Patricia Havranek, Chair

Gary Arvin

Heidi Grant Murphy

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Background and Literature Review

Classical musicians are interpreters of an art form that is advanced by a small number of individuals, namely composers and a handful of musically-inclined poets and dramaturgs. Once a sufficient level of technical proficiency has been acquired by a performer, an enormous amount of energy is devoted to bringing out the original intentions of the composer, who is often long dead. The role of the composer is so specialized that composers are often isolated from the individuals that perform their works, relying on other composers and secondary sources for an understanding of their medium. This problem is by no means isolated to classical performance, but is common to all performing arts with an extensive history. What many assume to be the complete art of acting is in fact a naturalistic style of theater that was popularized near the end of the 19th century. Dancers are perhaps even more restricted, as the popular conception of their classical art form is restricted to specific choreography and music of a very limited number of Russian ballets. Thankfully, artists in these fields have long been working against these restricting forces and have developed methods for the collaborative creation of new works. In deference to the existing literature in the theatrical field, this paper will refer to such collaborative methods as *devising*.

Devising

An important starting point for this exploration is a definition: “A devised theatre product is a work that has emerged from and been generated by a group of people working in collaboration.”¹ The phrase “working in collaboration” must be expanded as this aspect could take a potentially limitless amount of forms. In fact, the avoidance of definition or neat categorization or is one of the inherent characteristics of devising, as described in *Making a*

1. Alison Oddey, *Devising theatre: a practical and theoretical handbook*. Routledge, 2013, 1.

performance: devising histories and contemporary practices, “devising is most accurately described in the plural – as *processes* of experimentation and sets of creative *strategies*”.² The initial definition can now be reformulated as: A devised theatre product is a work that has emerged from and been generated by a group of people working in collaboration employing processes of experimentation and creative strategies.

Collaboration is difficult. This fact would be echoed by businesspeople and athletes but is felt strongly in the artistic world. An argument for a collaborative approach to theater is well laid-out in Leon Ingelsrud’s “Why Devise? Why Now? Twelve Thoughts on Devising with Undergrads” and is paraphrased here: Theater is an art and the desired result of any theatrical project is a work of art. The primary artists of theater are actors, who are therefore artists. As the principle artists of the art form, they therefore are a “critical creative constituent within the process of creating a work of theatre.”³ Avoiding the concept of “primary artist,” Moises Kaufman’s work with *Tectonic Theater Project* reconceives the traditional “vertical” theater hierarchy (written work as the foundation, followed by direction, acting, stagecraft, and music) to a horizontal organization where the elements are allowed to share equal importance.⁴ This provides all artists involved in the collaboration the agency to contribute to the creative process, transforming the contributing artists from their conceived professional roles (actor, designer, etc.) into “performance writers” for the brainstorming and development phase of the work.⁵ For any group seeking to provide this agency, it is then vital to investigate the “processes of experimentation and creative strategies” that define a method of devising.

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2. Govan, Emma, Helen Nicholson, and Katie Normington. *Making a performance: devising histories and contemporary practices*. Routledge, 2007, 7.
 3. Leon Ingelsrud, “Why Devise? Why Now? Twelve Thoughts on Devising with Undergraduates.” *Theatre Topics* 15, no. 1 (2005), 87-88.
 4. Rich Brown, “Moises Kaufman: The Copulation of Form and Content.” *Theatre Topics*, 15 no. 1, (2005), 52.
 5. Ibid.

Processes of experimentation are critical to the brainstorming stages of any devised project and are especially important for content generation. The goal of experimentation could be to generate an initial “spark” that generates a motivating idea or could be to develop ideas from methodically gathered research. The initial ideas of collaborative projects are the prized commodities of devising ensembles, as described by Norma Bowles, head of *Fringe Benefits Theatre*, “Like a possessed talent scout, I’m often scoping out rooms, looking for that telltale (figurative or actual) glint [in someone’s eye].”⁶ Moises Kaufman calls his guiding thematic idea a *hunch*, “the unformed impulse that pulls an artist into a rehearsal space where he can unpack it.”⁷ *Fringe Benefits Theatre* begins every project speaking to a specific community about “social justice issues – especially those concerning discrimination and diversity – that are negatively impacting their lives.”⁸ Once they have identified a specific problem, they then identify what audience that group needs to reach and what impact the group wishes to achieve, providing a specific objective for the work.⁹ Once these guiding ideas have been identified, examples of experimentation range from group free writing exercises and improvised scenes,¹⁰ to breaking with normal rehearsal structure and allowing class and rehearsal to be dictated by student inquiry,¹¹ to interdisciplinary collaboration between seemingly unrelated groups.¹² In all cases where experimentation is encouraged, it is principally important to create “an atmosphere that allows for failure without lowering standards.”¹³ The true variety of devising methods becomes

6. Norma Bowles, “Why Devise? Why Now? ‘Houston, we have a problem.’” *Theatre Topics* 15, no. 1, (2005), 17.

7. Brown, 61.

8. Bowles, 16.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., 17.

11. Joni L. Jones /Iya Omi Osun Olomo, “Why Devise? Why Now? Riffing on the syllabus.” *Theatre Topics* 15, no. 1, (2005), 49.

12. Mahoney and Brown, 143.

13. Ingelsrud, 89.

apparent in the creative strategies that different ensembles use to develop material inspired from the motivating idea of the project.

One of the underlying themes throughout collaborative rehearsal processes is a variety of creative strategies for content generation. Otherwise stated by Rich Brown, “The nature of devising has, it seems, a need for over-collection and ruthless cutting.”¹⁴ Many of the creative strategies for content generation reflect the socially-oriented mission of the organizations’ directors. Initial strategies include interviews with community members,^{15,16} active inclusion of a target outreach group,¹⁷ and essay writing from ensemble members.^{18,19} Once research has been gathered, it is often developed through an ensemble-specific process. *Tectonic Theater Company* has ensemble members create and present Moments, or “a unit of theatrical time that is then juxtaposed with other units to convey meaning”.²⁰ Each rehearsal during the development process of a project incorporates presentations of these Moments, which are developed individually or in small groups outside of rehearsal.²¹ *Fringe Benefits Theatre* describes this portion of their process as a “Dramaturgical Quilting Bee” where they record group sessions incorporating shared stories, improvised and composed scenes, either real or fictional, then transcribe them and collaboratively work their compositions into a script.²² A common development process for young or inexperienced performers is to have them begin with free

14. Brown, 62.

15. Crystal Brian, “Devising Community.” *Theatre Topics* 15, no. 1, (2005), 5.

16. Bowles, 16.

17. Annie McKean, “Playing for time in ‘The Dolls’ House’. Issues of community and collaboration in the devising of theatre in a women’s prison.” *Research in Drama Education*, 11, no. 3, (2006), 313.

18. Brian, 6.

19. Anne Wessels, “Plague and paideia: sabotage in devising theatre with young people.” *RiDE: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 17, no. 1, (2012): 53-72.

20. Brown, 51.

21. Brown, 62.

22. Bowles, 17.

writing, proceed to composing monologues, then break into scene writing groups.^{23, 24} In the case of “Playing for Time,” which was devised with inmates in a women’s prison, the everyday activities and interactions were dramatized for the final performance.²⁵ Important for devised theater as a whole is that generated content does not necessarily need to be spoken or written, returning to *Tectonic Theater Company*, “you can have a Moment that deals only with lights, or a Moment that deals only with blocking or costumes, or sets, or music.”²⁶

At some point in the devising process, the collection of generated material becomes such that it has to be cut and formed into a final product. This brings into play the question of how to evaluate units of the collaboratively developed work described. These may include diverse performance media, often include work that members of the evaluating body have spent time and labor developing, and are by nature ambiguous. In fact, Nic Fryer describes how the most valuable moments of his students’ devised pieces include aspects that are difficult to understand and therefore measure.²⁷ He suggests using the evaluative method of *Goat Island*, who provide the following guidance,

If we think of critical as negative... then problems become the object of our creative mind masquerading as a critical mind. We then start to see problems everywhere... For now we will try an experiment. We will engage the critical mind to observe the moments in the work we are looking at that seem to us the most exceptional and inspiring – the miraculous moments. Maybe this approach will allow us to keep the creative mind deliberately engaged as we engage the critical mind.²⁸

This approach is echoed in Mahoney and Brown, where the authors incorporated the Liz Lerman Critical Response System, which begins with an initial discussion of the most effective moments

23. Wessels, 55.

24. Brian, 6.

25. McKean, 318.

26. Brown, 54.

27. Fryer, Nic, “From reproduction to creativity and the aesthetic: towards an ontological approach to the assessment of devised performance.” *Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 15, no. 4, (2010), 548..

28. Ibid., 547.

in the piece. (Mahoney & Brown, 146) This is followed by artists questioning the audience about the effect of specific elements of the piece, then the audience questioning the artists about their intentions, and concludes with the audience offering solutions to creative problems.²⁹ Theater instructors venturing into collaborative work with their students often sacrifice creative control in order to foster agency among the student performers. Crystal Brian mentions one moment where the students felt it was inauthentic to perform the powerful material gathered from interviews with veterans as their own monologues as she had intended.³⁰ In a more extreme scenario, another instructor's class renegotiated the theme of the production mid-process.³¹ What she felt in the moment was an 'exciting moment of democratic pedagogy' turned out in concluding interviews to have been favored only by a portion of the student ensemble.³²

In contrast to these democratic groups, Moises Kaufman of *Tectonic* utilizes collaborative techniques while retaining executive control of the final product. Admittedly, this has the potential to introduce tension in the ensemble. Kaufman suggests that the refining process for collaborative work requires "an organizing principle to the work that allows you to make objective decisions about which moments will fit."³³ If a Moment is presented in rehearsal and a member of *Tectonic* is struggling to understand it, they will ask the formulaic question, 'How did it go?' The performer will explain what went well and what felt unclear and the audience will be able to get a clearer idea of the Moment's objective which ensemble members are free to rework multiple times.³⁴ Often, the effectiveness or appropriateness of an idea or 'Moment' becomes clear to the ensemble as a whole. In McKean's *Refuge* collaboration, it was a prisoner who

29. Kristin Mahoney & Rich Brown, "Devising and Interdisciplinary Teaching: A Case Study in Collaboration Between Theatre and Humanities Courses." *College Teaching*, 61 (2013), 146.

30. Brian, 5.

31. Wessels, 57.

32. Ibid.

33. Brown, 61.

34. Ibid., 62.

admitted that the group's powerful dramatizations of interactions with guards would not be acceptable for final performance.³⁵ *Fringe Benefits* makes use of an archetypal audience member to evaluate the effectiveness of the developing work. For a project with LGBT youth, they kept in mind a sports-oriented 11th grade John Q as their target audience.³⁶ They had to be careful choosing characters for their production with whom their passively homophobic fictional audience member could identify.³⁷ For a similar project with Latina mothers, when the community members laughed that their husbands would never come to see a play, the ensemble developed instead a production for television.³⁸

Central to the processes outlined above is a democratization of the creative process. Although devising is an exciting theoretical concept, successful artists sometimes suggest that such highly collaborative processes are difficult, are not cost-effective, and sacrifice quality. However, examining the trajectory of these artists often reveals a high level of collaboration, developed over a long career of trial and error. Devising an artistic work begins with two impulses, described by Rich Brown: 1. I am not a writer. I need other people to help me make a play. 2. Actors are not 'the talent'; they are creative artists. It is the intention of this project to generalize those impulses to music performance.

Service Learning

Kimberly Carballo teaches an Indiana University course entitled *Performing Arts Education and Outreach*. The course "aims to provide students with guided preparation and

35. McKean, 318.

36. Bowles, 18.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid., 20.

practical experience performing in the community and working in community

engagement/outreach.³⁹ The course is described as a service learning course, which

provides practical experience outside the classroom/practice room, something vital to performing artists as they transition from students to emerging professionals. In addition to these practical concerns, service learning also supports the philosophical principle of serving and being actively engaged in the community where one lives and works.⁴⁰

Service learning as a greater field includes any activity where students “engage in community-service activities with intentional academic and learning goals and opportunities for reflection that connect to their academic disciplines.”⁴¹ In contrast to traditional collegiate coursework, where content is presented and processed by students, service learning occurs when students reflect on the interaction between their community experiences and the material presented in classroom lectures.⁴²

Central to Carballo’s vision for community engagement in the performing arts is a transformation in student concept from performers into “teaching artists,” balancing the artistic necessities of serving, teaching, and creating.⁴³ This is echoed by Juilliard President Joseph Polisi, who advocated for pedagogy curriculum at performance-centric conservatories, saying,

The performing artist of the twenty-first century must be a teacher in the purest and most honorable sense of the term. A teacher who internalizes his or her art so completely that its manifestation is part of the persona of the artist.⁴⁴

In addition to readings and assignments on community engagement, students enrolled in

Carballo’s class participate in rehearsals and performances for *Reimagining Opera for Kids*

39. Kimberly Carballo, “Performing Arts Education and Outreach.” (syllabus, Jacobs School of Music, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, Fall 2015).

40. Ibid.

41. Christine Marie Cress, Peter John Collier, and Vicki Lynn Reitenauer, *Learning through serving: A student guidebook for service-learning across the disciplines*. Stylus Publishing, LLC., 2005, 7.

42. Ibid., 8.

43. Kimberly Carballo, interview by Reuben Walker, December 8, 2016.

44. Joseph W. Polisi, *The artist as citizen*. Amadeus Press, 2005, 18.

(ROK), whose goals are “to introduce area children to opera through engaging first experiences as audience members, and to give developing professional musicians an opportunity to hone their performance skills.” Part of the ROK curriculum includes a newly commissioned opera once a year for the primary aged children. Constraints provided for the composer are that it be 25 minutes in length (providing 5 minutes for question and answer), that it include four singers, whose parts are generally interchangeable for gender and voice type and can be sung early in the morning, and whose orchestral parts are piano and three similarly interchangeable instruments.⁴⁵ The piece is completed and rehearsed daily in a “camp week” in mid-August prior to the first week of classes, then refreshed weekly, incorporating new ensemble members. Students taking the service learning course for full credit participate in an additional 40-hour project with a community partner. Examples include direct service with the MAYO strings program with the Bloomington Boys and Girls Club and Christopher Bultman in his many performing arts endeavors at The Project School, as well as project-based service, namely grant writing for various Bloomington community arts groups.⁴⁶

An important consideration for any service learning curriculum is how the process distinguishes itself from volunteer labor. An ideal service-learning experience allows students, through reflection on their experience, to build skills in their academic discipline, deepen their knowledge of issues facing communities, and develop a greater capacity for self-awareness.⁴⁷ More specifically, these aspects can be laid out in “Seven C’s”:

- Consciousness of self; motivating beliefs, values, attitudes, and emotions.
- Congruence; behaving with consistency, authenticity, and honesty towards others.
- Commitment, the motivation to serve that drives the collective effort.
- Collaboration, to work with others in a common effort.

45. Carballo Interview

46. Carballo Syllabus, 3.

47. Cress, 24.

- Common purpose, performing collaborative work with shared aims and values.
- Controversy with Civility, recognizing, that
 - differences in viewpoint are inevitable, and
 - such differences must be aired openly but with civility to make progress.
- Citizenship, whereby the individual and the collaborative group become responsibly connected to the community through service.⁴⁸

Interestingly, these guidelines for effective service-learning seem strikingly similar to those laid out by a variety of devising ensembles for effective collaboration. For a further comparison, in a speech to the board of the National Endowment for the Arts, Joseph Polisi called for a horizontal organization of grant categories for NEA award applications. He suggested that any successful application would need to include aspects of Creation and Performance, Education, Community Involvement, as well as Dissemination, Documentation, and Preservation (or “technology as a tool”).⁴⁹ This echoes not only the “horizontal dramatic structure” of Kaufman’s *Tectonic* ensemble, but also the various community and social-justice projects of devising ensembles. Polisi continues in his speech to outline the two major issues facing the state of American arts; the state of music education at the primary and secondary levels, and community outreach and public/private partnerships created to benefit the quality of life of citizens in urban and rural areas.⁵⁰ The fact that these two issues align so closely with the mission of Carballo’s service learning course and *Reimagining Opera for Kids* shows the necessity and power of similar programming in the conservatory setting.

The execution of ROKs programming seems to have a significant complicating factor that stems from the nature of music training in conservatories; namely, that neither composers nor performers receive training to perform for the youth audiences that ROK targets. As a result, composed works are often appropriate and creative, but are lacking from the perspective of

48. Cress, 39-40.

49. Polisi, 50.

50. Polisi, 51-52.

communication, whether musical or textual. Likewise, performers often lack the flexibility required to perform effectively for young audiences in varied situations, from ten children in a small classroom to hundreds in an enormous gymnasium. Handling problems of communication with a composer is a very delicate problem due to the status of the composer in western music. It seems to be understood that although the commission is expected to fulfill all of the personnel parameters required by the commission, the “creative” decisions are to be left to the composer. Once the score is handed over to the conductors, instrumentalists, and singers, it is effectively complete and it is the job of the performers to realize its potential. Invariably, this leads to necessary cuts and changes by ensemble members during the rehearsal process that may not serve the composer’s intention. Performers likewise are provided direction for their performances, but this usually comes from an experienced fellow singer, who has similarly limited experience performing for youth audiences.

This dissertation proposes to address these challenges by incorporating devising methods into the ROK and service learning curriculum. The nature of service learning, combined with the atmosphere cultivated by Carballo’s leadership and guidance provide the foundation required for effective collaboration. The structure of the curriculum will be guided by backward course design as described in Wiggins and McTighe’s *Understanding by Design*. The primary task is a modification of the experimental processes and creative techniques incorporated by devising ensembles to introduce a similar horizontal hierarchy and transform participating instrumentalists, singers, conductors, and composers into “performance writers.”

Curriculum Design

In a performance-oriented conservatory curriculum, opera workshop for example, the core task of the semester is to turn a detailed score, perhaps with aid of historical recordings, into a moving and polished performance. The core task of a devising curriculum is for students to become performance writers.⁵¹ The performance of composed *moments* (and critical response to others' performances) throughout the semester will reflect students' mastery of the task. Students cannot be complacent simply to wait for composed material to appear in front of them, but must engage with the creative process throughout. Just as singers cannot perform without composed or arranged music, composers cannot truly be expected to write optimal music without a thorough understanding of the capabilities of their singers. Similarly, it would seem ideal for a librettist to be able to gain a sense of their performers' dispositions and capabilities as communicators before composing a text.

How can these understandings be facilitated in an organic way? Through the creation and development of short performance *moments*. A moment comes out of the devising tradition and is defined as "A unit of theatrical time that is then juxtaposed with other units to convey meaning."⁵² A unit of theatrical time could be the expected; a scene with actors onstage, for example, but it could also be concept for the set, lighting design, or (particularly relevant to this curriculum) music. Over the course of the brainstorming period, performers will perform repertoire suitable for their voice and instrument, either from prior repertoire or newly prepared. These short moments will be inspired from the themes of performance and will hopefully shape not only the vocal and instrumental writing, but the musical and textual composition as well. With his devising ensemble, Moises Kaufman would sometimes provide a loose theme for the

51. Brown, 65.

52. Moises Kaufman, *The Laramie Project*. Vintage, 2010, xiv.

next day's moments – homophobia, violence against homosexuals, and the reactions of small town America, for example.⁵³ Such a prompt allows for a large amount of creative leeway for the students, something that can be exciting and overwhelming. The aspect of choosing a piece that is optimally suited to the student's voice or instrument necessarily requires strong cooperation from their private instructor.

The next question to address is how the developing themes of the performance are to be explored. This is achieved in a devising setting through the use of a *hunch*. Influenced by stage director Peter Brook, a hunch is defined as an “unformed impulse that pulls an artist into a rehearsal space where he can unpack it.”⁵⁴ In a devised setting, the hunch is stated explicitly and is intended as the driving force for all artistic decisions, even serving as a prompt for the auditions. An example of a hunch could be:

Inspired by novelist Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* and photographer Robert Frank's *The Americans*, the production will explore why these two artists traveled thousands of miles to ask “what does it mean to be an American?” What did that question mean fifty years ago and how does that question resonate today?⁵⁵

Rich Brown, the director of Western Washington University's devised program is quick to point out, “It's an unanswerable question, ‘What is it to be American?’ There is no single answer to it. There are only thousands of possible answers. I think Devising provides an opportunity to attempt... the impossible.”⁵⁶ From Peter Brooks' perspective, the goal of rehearsal is to create “a climate in which it is possible for the actors to produce everything that they can bring to the work.”⁵⁷ Such a process was valid for his staging of existing works such as *King*

53. Brown, 58.

54. Ibid, 64.

55. Western Washington University, “WWU students write, perform ‘US’ theater production”. Filmed [April 2011]. YouTube video, 9:59. Posted [April 2011].
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YU45GuSpIaA&feature=player_embedded

56. Ibid.

57. Daniel Labeille, “The Formless Hunch: An Interview with Peter Brook.” *Modern Drama* 23, no. 3 (1980), 222.

Lear. The actors of his plays are ‘producing’ the artistic decisions left to them by the playwright, normally provided by the director during a concept. In a pure devised setting, the actors become performance writers and take part in both the compositional and production processes.⁵⁸ The tasks of the performance writers in devised theater include engaging in writing groups, experimenting with lighting, scenic and costume design, and even music composition and choreography. Additional musical tasks could include orchestration. For three-quarters of his rehearsal process, Brooks encouraged his actors and himself to produce “a monstrous excess of good and bad ideas... so that, gradually, the formless hunch begins to take form by meeting that mass of material.”⁵⁹

It is possible to envision how larger-scale musical forms could begin to emerge from such a process. If the majority of performed moments tend toward solo vocal or instrumental works, then a themed concert might begin to emerge as the end production. If the moments include more ensemble work and theatrical content, then a staged work might be more feasible. Three quarters of the way through his rehearsal process for a play, Brooks states that he is then confronted with “the play itself and a superstructure of [excrement] which comes from the actors and himself.”⁶⁰ His final stages of rehearsal are a period of ruthless cutting, encouraging the actors to “discard all that is superfluous” in order to tighten the final performance and get to the core of the play.⁶¹ Once again, in a pure devising context, this cutting will include not only dramatic and staging elements, but actual thematic and musical omissions. Moments that students have painstakingly prepared will need to be left out of the show.

58. Brown, 64.

59. Labeille, 225.

60. Ibid, 226.

61. Ibid.

Desired Outcome

The concept of a hunch provides a natural segue into curriculum planning, as it beautifully echoes a central tenet of backwards curriculum design as presented in *Understanding by Design* by Grant P. Wiggins and Jay McTighe. The primary desired outcome of this devised, performance-based curriculum is fairly clear: students will collaborate as performance writers to create a musical performance. Although that desired outcome could be broken down into sub-categories of collaboration, creation, and performance, the final performance is the clear culmination for each student enrolled in the class. This is true for any performance curriculum from choir to opera workshop.

Desired Understandings and Essential Questions

After identifying a *desired outcome* for a curriculum, the next step in backwards design is to identify the *desired understandings* and *essential questions* of the course. Wiggins and McTighe describe understandings as important, specific, and useful generalizations; transferable beyond a specific topic and often abstract and misunderstood.⁶² Such understandings are best learned by doing, or are actively “uncovered” by the students in a realistic setting using real-world problems.⁶³ In skill areas (language, sports, and performing arts) they summarize important principles⁶⁴ and it is this point where desired understandings become especially useful for a performance curriculum. To use the authors’ sports example, an essential understanding would be that “Total force equals the sum of force each body segment produces if the forces are applied in a single direction with proper sequence and correct timing” and that “When all forces are applied sequentially in the same direction with proper timing, maximum acceleration and

62. Wiggins & McTighe, 128

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid, 129.

maximum force is achieved.”⁶⁵ Of extreme importance is the following statement: “Novice golfers are not expected to restate these ideas in these words but to grasp their truth as transferable understandings, reflected in their actions and self-assessments on the golf course, driving range, and the putting green.”⁶⁶ Such a consideration is vitally important for performers. Conservatory curricula have the delicate challenge of remaining rigorous while focusing essentially on the performing goals of the students. It is the difference between knowing something as a fact and having it become an intrinsic part of the performer. It does not matter if the student can remember all of the rules of French diction. It just matters if they can perform convincingly in the moment.

As a performance instructor, it is often tempting to encourage growth through rote repetition within lessons and drilled-practice in the students’ free time. Instructors often feel the pull of the magical “Aha!” moment where the student recognizes their growth as a result of exercises which seem abstract in the moment. The authors of *Understanding by Design* caution, “Units and courses that focus on skill development need to explicitly include desired understandings... As research and practice confirm, understanding-based teaching of skills develops more fluent, effective, and autonomous proficiency than does instruction relying on rote learning and drill-and-practice alone.”⁶⁷

Some proposed understandings for a devising curriculum include:

- Students will understand that they are in control of their own output as creative individuals.
- Students will understand that collaboration is time-consuming and simultaneously frustrating and fulfilling.

65. Ibid, 141.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid, 133.

In a backwards curriculum design, proposed understandings are paired with essential questions which will lead students to those understandings. Essential questions have four different connotations. They can firstly be “important questions that recur throughout all our lives,” making them perpetually arguable and a perfect jumping off point for discussion.⁶⁸ Essential questions should also be “core ideas” central to a discipline, meaning that they are both historically meaningful as well as contemporary. Perhaps most importantly, they should “Help students effectively inquire and make sense of important but complicated ideas,” and “most engage a specific and diverse set of listeners.”⁶⁹ An essential question that pairs well with the first proposed understanding of this curriculum is:

- “Are classical musicians artists or technicians?”

Returning to the *Citizenship* presented in the Seven C’s of service-learning, a devised outcome must be connected to the community.⁷⁰ Some further desired understandings related to this aspect are:

- Students will understand that communities have diverse social (and therefore artistic) needs.
- Students will understand that art and society are linked.
- Students will understand that they as artists can collaborate to craft art that shapes the needs of their community.

Some paired essential questions include:

- Is art a function of society? Is society a function of art?
- Do people need art?

68. Ibid, 110.

69. Ibid.

70. Cress, 39-40.

Most importantly, this circles back to the hunch, the central thematic question of the piece to be created, which will anchor the created elements in the interests and needs of the community.

Some hunches from past projects include:

- What are our day-to-day interactions with race, ethnicity, and gender? (Pilot)
- How does what's in your lunchbox reflect your culture? (Lunchbox)
- What role does a parent play in a child's life and how do siblings fill that void when the parent is gone? How does raising children interact with parents' pursuit of meaningful life? (Worthy of Rest)

Assessment

Once the desired understandings and essential questions have been identified, backwards design calls for the development of assessments. One difficulty in assessing performance-based curriculum is that cultivating internal motivation is an important desired outcome. Incorporating grades as an extrinsic motivational factor endangers the first desired understanding of this curriculum, namely "Students will understand that they are in control of their own output as creative individuals." Evaluations therefore should be crafted in a way to develop the desired understandings through engagement with the essential questions of the course.

In order to develop students' motivation as creative individuals, it is important to encourage independent creation. At the beginning of each class period, two to three in-class moments will be performed voluntarily followed by a Liz Lerman Critical Response Session.⁷¹ In order to introduce the form, in the second and third class meetings, all enrolled students will present a performance representative of their past creative output as performer, composer, actor, or visual artist that relates to the hunch. Prior to the performance, students will submit a written response

71. Liz Lerman and John Borstel. *Liz Lerman's critical response process: a method for getting useful feedback on anything you make, from dance to dessert*. Liz Lerman Dance Exchange, 2003.

to *statements of meaning*, “How does the performance you have prepared have meaning for you in relation to the hunch?” In class, audience members will respond to the same question with respect to the performance they have observed as well as make suggestions for possible *next steps*. The performer will record their responses and submit a typed summary for credit. The assignment will be graded for completion.

Following those introductory performances, students will engage with the essential question of the curriculum, “Are classical musicians artists or technicians?” by presenting either entirely original compositions, or altered prepared performances in which they exhibit significant creative agency. Prior to performance, performers will submit at least three questions pertaining to their moment to which they would like their audience to respond. After performing and receiving feedback, students will write up the feedback session including *statements of meaning*, *questions from the artist*, *neutral questions from the audience*, and *permissioned opinions*. An additional section will be included in the write-up for *next steps*. The reflection will be graded for completion in three parts: questions submitted prior to performance, write-up of in-class critical response session, and next steps. Students must participate in one original moment presentation within weeks two to seven of content creation. In order to engage with the second desired understanding and to encourage collaboration, in week three through seven, all performed moments will require two or more collaborators. Although performances are voluntary, and can even be repeated, two performances for the following session will be scheduled at the end of each class. The instructor will encourage those who have not performed to volunteer, and if students have not yet performed by week six, they will be scheduled by the instructor for the remaining four sessions.

In order to develop the desired understandings related to community engagement, students will respond to two weekly prompts on an online discussion board. The first question will serve as an introduction to each weeks in-class activities while the second prompt will serve as a reflection to focus the students' development and rehearsal of their moments over the weekend. Responses will again be graded for completion. Although the specific hunch of the semester project will guide the creation of prompts, possible community engagement themes are taken from *Learning through Serving: A Student Guidebook for Service-Learning Across the Disciplines* and include:

- The Development of a Group⁷²
- Communication in Groups⁷³
- Becoming Community: Moving from I to We⁷⁴
 - What does it mean for a group of diverse (or not-so-diverse) artists to work on art intended to reach a diverse community?
- Building Intercultural Sensitivity⁷⁵
 - Development of Intercultural Sensitivity⁷⁶
 - Ethno-Centrive Stages: Denial, Defense, Minimization
 - Ethno-Relative Stages: Acceptance, Adaptation, Integration

The main evaluative component of the curriculum is the final performance at the end of the semester. First, as a midterm project, students will film and edit a 60-90 second YouTube trailer for their final live performances. The trailer should present the spirit of the eventual work while remaining open-ended enough for possible changes throughout the development process.

72. Cress, 72.

73. Ibid, 84-85.

74. Ibid, 57.

75. Ibid, 101.

76. Milton J. Bennett, *Developmental model of intercultural sensitivity*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1998.

For the final project, groups of four to five students (depending on class composition) will prepare an 8-12 minute performance developed in class and inspired from the original hunch. The performance will incorporate live music, sung and spoken word, and movement. Both midterm and final project will be graded by equally-weighted self- and instructor-assessment rubrics.

Schedule

The simplest form of this curriculum is a one-semester introduction to collaborative methods. In order to take advantage of an existing performance curriculum model, Indiana University's weekly schedule for Opera Workshop will be used as the framework. The introductory course will assume a three-credit course meeting twice a week (Tuesday/Thursday) with 1 hour 15 minute lectures.⁷⁷ The Tuesday/Thursday meetings therefore avoid Labor Day and Fall Break, leaving Thanksgiving Break as the only extracurricular influence on a fifteen-week rehearsal period. The break serves as a natural landmark for the end of the development phase and the "locking" of performance content. Dress and technical rehearsals will take place in the weeks following the break and the final performance will be scheduled during finals week.

The first half of the semester is devoted to brainstorming and content creation. The first five weeks have an in-class focus on improvisatory forms in theater, music, and movement. Week six and seven focus specifically on harnessing the ideas revealed in the improvisatory exercises, applying them toward content creation. Rehearsals during these weeks focus on textual composition, musical composition, and performance methods respectively. During these weeks, the ensemble will experiment with a concept called "Rotating Ogreship" borrowed from Sheila

77. "Indiana University Bloomington." Course Browser: Office of the Registrar: Indiana University Bloomington. May 1, 2017. Accessed February 10, 2018.
<http://registrar.indiana.edu/browser/soc4178/MUS/MUS-R571.shtml>.

Kerrigan's *Performer's Guide to the Collaborative Process*. "Rotating Ogreship" is a power-sharing structure in which ensemble members take turn wielding absolute decision-making power over the ensemble, providing their "peons" with the element the ensemble will explore in the rehearsal and the job of each ensemble member.⁷⁸ The peons may ask for clarification, but their essential task is to please the ogre, ceding evaluation until the rehearsal period is complete.⁷⁹ During this period (and for the duration of the semester), the instructor serves as "Super-Ogre" and retains final say over the artistic direction of the piece, but cedes control to students during rehearsal in order to allow their ideas and thinking to fully "infiltrate" the work.⁸⁰

These content creation rehearsals will be split into three twenty-minute intervals with five minutes for reflection. Outside of class time, the instructor will meet with individual students whose background lends specific expertise to writing, composition, or performance in order to plan their "ogreship" of one of the twenty-minute blocks. Ogreship in this period will be voluntary and will not be evaluated. The potential ogres will be presented with a variety of potential activities with which to explore hunch themes that interest them. If no students are comfortable with a specific theme, the instructor will retain leadership of the rehearsal.

After fall break, the rehearsal process will enter the development stage. Week eight is split between a stage direction "Ogre" activity and a day devoted to developing one of the moments that has emerged as a theme for the final performance. Week nine is split between a music direction "Ogre" activity and developing a second moment. Weeks ten and eleven use the first day to work on a moment that has not yet been developed in class while using the second day to revisit an older moment. In the two weeks before break, the students will be split into

78. Kerrigan, 94.

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid, 95.

groups to work specifically on expanding the moments for their final performance. The instructor will work with each of them in turn. The midterm YouTube trailer for the final performances will be prepared primarily outside of class and will be due the last weekend in October.

In the two weeks following Thanksgiving Break, no new material will be composed. Ideally, each group will have created enough material that they will be forced to cut down within the 8-12 minute time frame for their performance. The performances will take place during finals week, or the weekend prior, with an invited audience.

Devising – Course Schedule – Walker			
Date	Week Topic		Assignments
8/23	1 Brainstorming	Hunch Intro / Musical and Theatrical Improvisation Primer	
		Prompt: How do our experiences intersect with the hunch?	
8/25		Pre-Prepared “Moments”	Intro Performances
8/30	2 B Thematic Content	Pre-Prepared “Moments”	Intro Performances
		Prompt: How does an audience’s experience intersect with the hunch?	
9/1		Viewpoints	
Labor Day	3 B Musical Content	Improvised Scenes	Moments 2+
9/6		Prompt: What are our individual reactions to music?	
9/8		Static Music Improvisation – Drone, Pass, Ostinato	
9/13	4 B Blending Thematic and Musical 1	Improvising with a pre-arranged form / Improvised scenes with music	
		Prompt: Musical (and Textual) Form	
9/15		Pure music discussion – Improvisation – Hunch discussion - Improvisation	
9/20	5 B Blending Thematic and Musical 2	Instructor “Super Ogre” Activity - Songwriting	
9/22		Instructor “Super Ogre” Activity - Songwriting	
9/27	6 B Content Creation	Libretto “Ogre” Activity	
		Composer “Ogre” Activity	
9/29			
10/4	7 B Content Creation	Performer “Ogre” Activity	
10/6		(Moment Performances)	Final Moment Pres
Fall Break		Performer “Ogre” Activity	
10/11	8 D	Director “Ogre” Activity	
		Moment 1 Development	
10/13			
10/18	9 D	Music Director “Ogre” Activity	
		Moment 2 Development	
10/20			
10/25	10 D	Moment 3 Development	
		Moment 1 / 2 Development	
10/27			Midterm Due

11/1	1 D	Moment 4 Development	
		Moment 1 / 2 / 3 Development	
11/3			
11/8	2 D	Moment 3 Development	
		Moment 4 Development	
11/10			
11/15	3 D	Moment 1 Development	
		Moment 2 Development	
11/17			
Thanksgiving Break			
11/29	4 R	Final Rehearsals	
12/1			
12/6-12/8	5 R	Dress/Technical Rehearsals	
Final Presentation Wednesday, December 14th at 5 pm			

Syllabus Collaborative Methods

MUS 483(18682)

Fall, 2018: TR 10:30-11:45 MA B012

Reuben Walker, MM

Email: reuwalke@indiana.edu

Studio: MA168, office hours by appointment

Course Description:

A devised performance is “a work that has emerged from and been generated by a group of people working in collaboration.” This course provides an introduction to collaborative theatrical and musical compositional methods that can lead to the development of original works.

Desired Understandings:

Students will understand that they are in control of their own output as creative individuals.

Students will understand that collaboration is time-consuming and simultaneously frustrating and fulfilling.

Students will understand that communities have diverse social (and therefore artistic) needs.

Students will understand that they as artists can collaborate to craft art that shapes the needs of their community.

Essential Questions:

Are classical musicians artists or technicians?

Do people need art?

Assessment:

Final Performance: 45% A+: 100-97; A: 96-93; A-: 92-90; etc.

Midterm Project: 25%

Original Moment: 20%

Introductory Moment: 10%

Course Breakdown:

Introductory Moment and Reflection: In the second and third class meetings, all enrolled students will present a performance that relates to the hunch. Prior to the performance, students will submit a written statement of meaning. In class, audience members will respond with their statements of meaning and make suggestions for possible next steps. The performer will record their responses and submit a typed summary for credit.

Original Moment Performance and Reflection: The original moment compositions will be evaluated in three steps: Prior to performance, performers will submit at least three questions pertaining to their moment to which they would like their audience to respond. After performing

and receiving feedback, students will write up the feedback session including *statements of meaning, questions from the artist, neutral questions from the audience, and permissioned opinions*. The final step is to outline *next steps*.

Journals: The maintenance of a performance journal is *highly* recommended. It will not be evaluated.

“Ogre” Class Sessions: Each student will be asked to lead a twenty minute rehearsal session during weeks six through nine. The final performances will benefit from each individuals contributions and unique vision, but these sessions are voluntary and will not be graded. Each “Ogre” will meet with the instructor for a half hour outside of class to lesson plan the rehearsal with their “peons.”

Midterm Performance: For your midterm you will be creating a video trailer for your final project performances which will be open to the public. Videos should be uploaded to YouTube, set to unlisted, and shared with the instructor by Sunday 10/23 at 11:59 pm.

Final Performance: **The final performance for the course will take place during the scheduled time for the final exam.**

Attendance: As devising is entirely reliant on collaboration, absences due to sickness will only be excused with a doctor’s note. The course takes place on Tuesday and Thursday and should provide opportunity for students to take auditions outside of those times. Absences for auditions may be excused if the student provides notice before the end of the second week of classes. Each unexcused absence will result in a full letter grade reduction. That being said, please contact me in extreme cases.

IU Policies

Disabilities: I am happy to make accommodations for any disability. Please contact the Office of Disability Services for Students (Franklin Hall 006, 855-7578). I can make adjustments to course requirements once I have a written evaluation from that office. Please see: <http://studentaffairs.iub.edu/dss/>

Academic Misconduct: I am completely in favor of working in groups, bouncing ideas off of peers, and looking to outside resources. However, you are responsible for creating your own material. Please see: <http://www.iu.edu/~code/bloomington/discipline/academic/index.shtml>

Course Texts:

Required:

Kerrigan, Sheila. *The Performer's Guide to the Collaborative Process*. Lulu Press, Inc., 2016.

Available through IU Libraries:

Cress, Christine Marie, Peter John Collier, and Vicki Lynn Reitenauer. *Learning through Serving: A Student Guidebook for Service-Learning Across the Disciplines*. Stylus Publishing, LLC., 2005.

Lesson Plan Day 1: Introduction to Devising

Learning Goals

Instructor will investigate themes that are important to students
Students will work on fleshing out the hunch
Students will experiment with musical improvisation
Students will experiment with theatrical improvisation

Materials

1.5 Hrs.
Mediated classroom
Room with space for movement
Piano
Available percussion instrument, body percussion an alternative

Sequence of Questions/Topics/Activities

10 Minute Activity

Fill a full page with questions pertaining to the sub-themes relating to the hunch.
Sample Hunch: How can junior-high culture be transformed so that students look forward to coming to school?

- Relationship between teachers and students
- Social cruelty at school
- Relationship between children and parents

5 Minutes

In groups, choose a single theme of the three:
Choose 2-3 of your questions to serve as primary questions
Hand in to the instructor

10 Minutes Group Reflection

What are the main themes that emerge?

Half Liz Lerman Response

- Statements of Meaning
 - What did you find meaningful, evocative, startling, or exciting?
- Opinions

20 Minutes Syllabus Day

Desired Outcome
Proposed Understandings
Essential Questions
Evaluations
Schedule

Musical Improvisation

2 Set up drum circle

2 Rhythm repetitions (provide musical language)

- Provide steady basic beat element
- Improvise variations that the group repeats

5 Improv pass

- Around the circle, group members improvise a rhythm and the rest of the group repeats
- Default rhythm is the basic beat element provided in the previous exercise

5 Improv Answer

- Around the circle, individual improvises a rhythm, next improviser answers.

2 Melodic repetitions (provide musical language)

- Provide a default pentatonic melody
- Improvise variations that the group repeats

5 Vocal Improv pass

- Around the circle, group members improvise a melody and the rest of the group repeats
- Default melody is the basic beat element provided in the previous exercise

Theatrical Improvisation

5 Clay Pass

- Goal: Students will create something from nothing.
- Instructor molds a block of imaginary clay into an object (boomerang, golf club, lasso, etc.), uses it, then molds it back into a shapeless blob and passes it to the next student.
- Ideally, the “instructions” could be modeled without any verbal cues.

5 Yes, let's

- Goal: Students will learn to say “Yes” to suggested improvised themes
- Student A stands in the middle of the circle. Student B enters the circle and suggests an activity. “Hey, Henry! Let's go bowling.” Student A responds “Yes, let's!” and they pantomime the activity together.

10 Freeze Tag

- Goal: Students will create a new scene from their peers' improvisations
- Student A and B act out a scene to a climax at which point Student C shouts “Freeze!” Students A and B freeze in place, Student C takes the exact position of either Student A or B and begins a completely different scene that makes use of their frozen position.

Hunch Worksheet

Sample Hunch:

How can junior-high culture be transformed so that students look forward to coming to school?

Below each possible sub-theme, free-write as many questions as possible. The goal is volume, not depth.

Relationship between teachers and students

Social cruelty at school

Relationship between children and parents

Lesson Plan Day 2 and Day 3: Pre-Prepared Performances

Learning Goals

Students will present a performance representative of their past creative output as artist that relates to the hunch.

Students will evaluate the performance's connection to the hunch prior to performance

Students will respond to one another's performances with *Statements of Meaning*

Students will brainstorm possible ways to deepen the performance

Materials

Piano

Chairs for audience

Liz Lerman Worksheet

Writing utensil

Sequence of Questions/Topics/Activities

- Homework prompt:
 - Prepare a 2-3 minute excerpt of a performance representative of your creative output as artist that relates to the hunch. Respond to the question “How does the performance you have prepared have meaning for you in relation to the hunch?” on the attached critical response form.
- Both class periods will be used for the presentation of performances.
- 3 minute performance, the next performer will set up while the audience responds
- 3-4 Minutes audience responds to the question “How does the performance you have experienced have meaning for you in relation to the hunch?” for 3-4 minutes depending on class size.
- 2-3 Minutes audience responds to *Next Steps*: How could this moment be deepened, expanded, or include more collaborators?
- The individual who just performed takes notes on the response to their moment.
- In the last 5 minutes of each class, gather themes that seem to be developing among the performances.

Introductory Performance Preparation and Response Worksheet

Title of Performance: _____

Statements of Meaning

- Performer response to the question:
 - How does the performance you have prepared have meaning for you in relation to the hunch?

- Audience responses to the question:
 - How does the performance you have experienced have meaning for you in relation to the hunch?

Next Steps: How could the moment be deepened, expanded, or include more collaborators?

Lesson Plan Day 4: Viewpoints⁸¹

Learning Goals

Students will develop physical awareness of themselves and others in space
Students will develop a physical and verbal language for movement

Materials

1.5 Hrs.
Space to move
Piano (for moments)
Movement clothing

Sequence of Questions/Topics/Activities

10 Minute Moment Presentations and Liz Lerman Critical Response

- 2 Moments presented with feedback session
- Due to my lack of expertise as a movement specialist, this lesson plan will be taken more or less verbatim from:
 - Anne Bogart and Tina Landau. *The viewpoints book: a practical guide to viewpoints and composition*. Theatre Communications Group, 2004: 35-52.

81. Anne Bogart and Tina Landau. *The viewpoints book: a practical guide to viewpoints and composition*. Theatre Communications Group, 2004.

Lesson Plan Day 5: Theatrical Improvisation

Learning Goals

Students will learn that they can improvise and write dramatic material
Students will learn to say “Yes” to suggestions onstage

Materials

1.5 Hrs.
Piano (for moments)
Space to move
Voices
*improv! A Handbook for the Actor*⁸²

Sequence of Questions/Topics/Activities

5 Minute Hunch Reflection: Example Questions – What are our individual reactions to music? Can music really be universal?

10 Minute 2 Moment Presentations and Liz Lerman Critical Response

5 Minutes Identify three themes from the hunch reflection and moment presentations that we would like to explore today.

Theatrical Improvisation

5 Clay Pass

- Goal: Students will create something from nothing.
- Instructor molds a block of imaginary clay into an object (boomerang, golf club, lasso, etc.), uses it, then molds it back into a shapeless blob and passes it to the next student.
- Ideally, the “instructions” could be modeled without any verbal cues.

5 Yes, let's

- Goal: Students will learn to say “Yes” to suggested improvised themes
- Student A stands in the middle of the circle. Student B enters the circle and suggests an activity. “Hey, Henry! Let's go bowling.” Student A responds “Yes, let's!” and they pantomime the activity together.

8 Freeze Tag

- Goal: Students will create a new scene from their peers' improvisations. Student A and B act out a scene to a climax at which point Student C shouts “Freeze!” Students A and B freeze in place, Student C takes the

82. Greg Atkins, *Improv!: A handbook for the actor*. Heinemann Drama, 1994.

exact position of either Student A or B and begins a completely different scene that makes use of their frozen position.

25 Automatic Storytelling

- 5 Minutes Split the group in 2. Half of the players leave the room while you explain the game to the others: we are going to make stories in pairs. We will tell the other players that we came up with a great story, and they have to guess it. The catch is that they can only ask yes/no questions, and we do not really have a story. We will answer `no` to every question that starts with a vowel or with a conjugation of `to be` (or some other criterion). In addition, after having answered 2 consecutive No`s we will always answer a yes.
- Let the other players back in and pair them up with the others. Each couple starts guessing the story, unknowingly creating a story as they go.
 - 5 Minutes to establish who, what, and where
 - 5 Minutes to establish what the conflict in the scene is
 - 5 Minutes to establish how the conflict was resolved
- “While you guys were out of the room, we came up with a great very short story about [insert one of the effective ideas from goals]. It’s your job to figure it out using yes or no questions.
- 5 Minutes everyone who left the room shares version of the story
- Identify three possibilities for final exercise. Consensus?

10 Beginning/Middle/End

- Two performers establish the Who/What/Where of the scene.
- Instructor calls “Freeze”
- Two new performers take the positions of the performers and establish the conflict of the scene.
- Instructor calls “Freeze”
- Two new performers bring the scene to conclusion

2 Summary

- Outline important themes explored in the silly games of the day
- Select two pairs/groups to explore some thematic moments for the next class meeting.

Lesson Plan Day 6: Musical/Vocal Improvisation

Learning Goals

- Students will explore vocal and instrumental improvisation
- Students will engage with improvisation as a process
- Students will engage with improvisation as the means to a product

Materials

- 1.5 Hrs.
- Space to make music independently in smaller groups
- Piano (for moments)
- Other instruments

Sequence of Questions/Topics/Activities

Homework: Bring in one song or fragment of a song that comes out of an oral tradition and be prepared to sing it. It could be a folk song, traditional song, or popular/art song that has become a cultural standard.

10 Minute Moment Presentations and Liz Lerman Critical Response

- 2 Moments presented with feedback session

Walking classical performers through improvisatory techniques is a potential ego-minefield, in that very few classical performers receive any formal training in improvisation. In fact, years of classical voice lessons was found to be detrimental to improvisation among jazz singers in a 2008 study.⁸³ In terms of jazz improvisation, the primary factor that the instructor should attempt to cultivate is “jazz syntax,” which is dominated by rhythm but also includes concepts such as tonal language, harmonic use, and melodic variety. As this project is not specifically focused on the jazz idiom, this session will focus on rhythm, tonal language, harmony, and melodic variety. This structure of the lesson will attempt to merge elements of

83. Patrice Madura Ward-Steinman, “Vocal Improvisation and Creative Thinking by Australian and American University Jazz Singers A Factor Analytic Study.” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 56, no. 1 (2008): 5-17.

Viewpoints with the Seven Stages of Vocal Improvisation as presented in John Kratus's "A developmental approach to teaching music improvisation."⁸⁴

- **Exploration**
- **Process Oriented Improvisation**
- **Product Oriented Improvisation**
- **Fluid Improvisation**
- **Structural Improvisation**

The final two levels are likely beyond the scope of such a curriculum.

- Stylistic Improvisation
- Personal Improvisation

10 Minute Warm Up:

- 3 Minutes Listening Exercise
 - The group stands in a circle and closes their eyes. At some point an individual says "One." The group then must count to ten without two individuals speaking at the same time. If they do, the counting starts over.
- 3 Minutes **Bubble up from silence**⁸⁵
 - The group starts from silence with closed eyes, and lets sound bubble up, live and die. The group should mix between more and less musical noise. It can start from breath, rhythm can emerge, strange noises, animal or machinery noises, then some notes might flower like petals, stretch and harmonize, fly a little together, then sink back into atonal sounds.
- 4 Minutes **Scene setting**⁸⁶
 - This is a bit like bubbling up from silence, but you start by deciding on a scene. It can be, 'sunrise in Mumbai', or, 'a swamp', or, '2am soho' etc. Again you start from silence, the scene rises, lives out a kind of story, and then dies back into silence.

84. John Kratus, "A developmental approach to teaching music improvisation." *International Journal of Music Education*, (1), 27-38.

85. Briony Greenhill, "Our Singing Thing." Group vocal improv exercises. January 01, 1970. Accessed February 12, 2018. <http://oursingingthing.blogspot.de/2012/01/group-vocal-improv-exercises.html>.

86. Ibid.

5 Minute *Duration*

- What if we just explore melody independent of a steady beat?
- Low voiced males or instrumentalists of the group provide a drone
- Remaining performers do a melodic answer

5 Minute *Tempo*

- Rhythm pass
- Rhythm answer
- Melodic answer with bass/rhythm ostinato

20 Minute *Response* Exercise

- Split into groups of three.
- **Motor, interlocker, counterpoint**⁸⁷

10 Minutes Version 1

Create a base with three roles.

The *motor* is a 1 - 4 bar repetitive riff. It has to have some space in it. Often you improvise your way into it, start singing whatever and wait for the loop to arise. The motor is also the conductor, and can lead key changes, endings, pauses, dynamic changes and so on.

The *interlocker* is like the motor's partner. It lives in the spaces created by the motor and works with the motor to create a strong basket to hold the piece in.

The *counterpoint* is another loop, but now an entirely new kind of sound, to create a fresh contrast to the motor-interlocker partnership. So, if they are very staccato, the counterpoint might be very flowing. If they descend slowly, the counterpoint might ascend quickly.

- 10 Minutes Version 2

Several other parts can layer upon the three part basis. Each of the primary three parts can have harmonies from other singers.

- Bass, rhythm section (can be two or more people) and a soloist are possible additions.
- Pause after a trial to remind performers to make use of *repetition* and *relationship* to other voices and sounds.

20 Minutes **You Sing, We Follow**⁸⁸

- First, as a group, an individual begins with one of the traditional song fragments, maybe a hymn tune or spiritual

87. Ibid.

88. Ibid.

- Individuals from the group add sound to support the song
- If successful, another individual can add a new song or song fragment and the group can respond. If less successful, or after the songs have been exhausted, split into smaller groups to rehearse a performance.

5 Minutes Recap

- How has your confidence with musical improvisation changed over the course of the lesson?
- How could you make use of these processes in your preparation of moments?

Lesson Plan Day 7 Musical Form⁸⁹

Learning Goals

Students will play with elements of form in their improvisations

Students will improvise scenes with music

Materials

1.5 Hrs.

Projector Camera if available

Quiet space to rehearse independently in three groups

Sequence of Questions/Topics/Activities

Moment Homework prior to class:

Task 1, Sample Poem

Mother to Son

By Langston Hughes

“Well, son, I’ll tell you:

Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair...”

Relook at the poem "Mother to Son" (or hunch relevant text) by Langston Hughes. Think about its structure, and answer these questions:

A.) Can the poem be broken down into sections? Maybe sections of 3 or 4 or maybe more lines.

B.) What in the text leads you to believe certain lines can be grouped into a section?

C.) Do the smaller sections have order / structure / form to them?

D.) How would this affect an improvised sung version of the poem?

Print out the poem, diagram your chosen sections, and upload a good quality photo/scan to canvas (if a projector camera is available, the students can simply bring their diagram with them). You could draw brackets grouping lines together, and then write a short

86. Inspired from an “Ogre” rehearsal by Vini Frizzo during the Pilot Devising Project

phrase describing what unifies these lines. The diagrams will be displayed from canvas or with the projector and you may be asked to explain your thoughts. If the text moves you, compose a song and present it as a moment at the beginning of class.

Sequence of Classroom Activities:

10 Minutes Moment performances

- 2 Moment performances, with Liz Lerman Critical Response
 - 3rd, if a student composed a song to provided poem text

15 Minutes Form Discussion

- What different ways can we split up this text?
- How could that influence musical form?
- The problem with group improvisation is that you invariably end up with a “[oblong potato]” form.
 - Starts out small, builds to a louder mess, then dissipates abruptly
- To combat this, suggest a road map of form from the beginning:
 - ABA’
 - Rondo form, ABACA
 - Verse-Chorus-Bridge-Chorus
 - Others?

10 Minutes

- Rondo form group improvisation
 - Form three groups who work on a group improvisation

20 Minutes

- Groups return and perform a variation of their improvisation for one another.
- Groups come to a consensus about an A section.
- Entire group attempts a group improvisation based on the A section
- Group attempts transitions: ABA, ACA
- Group attempts full piece in ABACA form.

15 Minutes Scenes with Soundtracks

- With a variety of pre-rehearsed pieces, either:
 - Pre-prepared personal moments
 - Today’s prepared moments
 - One of the improvised ABC sections
 - “Canned” piano music from the instructor
- Sequence:
 - Students will begin an improvised scene.
 - At a moment decided by the “conductor,” a chosen ensemble will begin performing as a soundtrack to the scene
 - Students engaged in the scene must adjust their actions based on the provided score
 - Alterations could include requiring singers to perform on a vowel of their choice or a hum in order to refrain from influencing the text.

- 5 Minute Reflection
 - What were the most magical combinations of music and staging?
 - How can we incorporate that level of magic into our eventual performance?

Homework:

Harold Bloom is noted for saying “The meaning of a poem can only be another poem.” The second task is to find another piece of text that the Hughes's poem made you think of. It could be a hymn, psalm, poem, quotation, book title, a short piece of a novel or book. How could that text be incorporated into a moment?

Lesson Plan Day 8: Hunch Emotion Musical Improvisation

Learning Goals

Students will directly connect emotions with their musical improvisations

Students will use musical improvisational tools to process a conversation related to the hunch

Materials

1.5 Hrs.

Piano

Voices

Instruments

Sequence of Questions/Topics/Activities

10-15 Minute 2-3 Moment Presentations and Liz Lerman Critical Response

10 Minutes

- Group brainstorm musical elements that express emotion
 - Joy, Sadness, Determination
- Brainstorm words that have those emotions as connotations

10 Minutes

- Attempt two group improvisations based on an emotion.
 - Is there any way to incorporate sung text?

20 Minutes Hunch Conversation

- Example from Pilot Project:
 - A participant was hanging out with friends in their dorm room and people were joking around and giving each other crap when one of the white members of the room jokingly called the participant uppity. The participant, being African American, felt a much stronger cultural weight to the term than her white friend had intended and was very hurt. Although they talked through it, her friend had trouble seeing how the term would be so hurtful as there was no way he would have intended it in the way it came across.
- Brainstorm alone a situation, or list of words that was unintentionally hurtful, or where you hurt others without intending to.
- Discuss your situations in small groups.
- Choose one situation and brainstorm a solution to the conflict.

5 Minutes

- Post-conversation improve based on the same emotion used for pre-conversation improve

10 Minutes

- How did the improvisation differ?
- What emotions were present compared to the first improvisation?

Lesson Plan Day 9 and Day 10: Songwriting Unit

Learning Goals

- Students will learn to set a text to music
- Students will connect musical and textual thematic ideas
- Students will learn to collaborate based on the skills of their group

Materials

- 3 Hrs.
- Keyboards (real or virtual)
- Other instruments
- Voices
- Piano
- Staff paper
- Space to work separately in groups of three
- Poem example that fits the hunch, for example, Maya Angelou's *Still I Rise*:

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

...

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Lesson 1 (1.5 hrs.)

Sequence of Questions/Topics/Activities

5 Minute Reflection: What makes a good song?

10 Minute Guided Listening with 2 contrasting examples fitting to musical goals

- Structure
- Harmony
- Possible Examples:
 - Sam Smith – Stay with me: simple strophic, same three chords, pentatonic
 - Ralph Vaughan Williams – Silent Noon: ABCA Form, mostly diatonic

15 Minutes Melody Brainstorm

- Option 1: Improvise a melody to the provided text using an Am pentatonic scale
- Option 2: Improvise a melody to the provided text using an A natural minor scale
- Option 3: Start a rhythmic or melodic ostinato and improvise freely

- With five minutes remaining, make sure your melody is recorded and/or written on staff paper
- 15 Minutes Harmony Brainstorm
- Option 1: Harmonize your Am diatonic/pentatonic melody with piano using Am Dm Em
 - A, C Harmonized with Am chord
 - B Harmonized with Em chord
 - D, F Harmonized with Dm chord
 - G Harmonized with Em chord
 - E Harmonized with Am or Em
 - Option 2: Harmonize freely with piano and improvise a melody
 - Option 3: Improvise vocal harmony over your ostinato and melody
- 20 Minutes
- Reconcile and polish your harmony and melody
 - Attempt to incorporate each group member
 - Instrumental obbligato
 - Vocal harmony
 - Body percussion
- 5 Minutes Voluntary Group Performance and Feedback (30 s to 1 m performance, 3 m feedback *Record Audio*
- Liz Lerman Critical Response Process
 - Statements of Meaning
 - What did you find meaningful, evocative, startling, or exciting?
 - Questions by Performers to Class
 - Questions by Class to Performers
 - Opinions
- 5 Minutes Explain Homework
- *Take a phone scan or photocopy any written materials used for the voluntary performance*

Homework for next meeting:

In your groups, compose a new song from a Hunch relevant existing (or original) text OR further develop your composition based on the questions and opinions heard in the critical response session. The 1-2 minute performances will take part in the first 15 minutes of class and could include instrumental accompaniment, vocal harmony, instrumental solos, spoken word, or other elements your group might find effective. As you compose and rehearse, think about how your piece could be expanded into a larger work incorporating more performing forces. The

performance should include photocopies of any written materials (leadsheet or score) for all classmates.

Lesson 2 (1.5 hrs.)

Materials

1.5 Hrs.
Keyboards (real or virtual)
Other instruments
Voices
Piano
Staff paper
Space to work separately in groups of three
“Staff paper” Chalk or Whiteboard

Sequence of Questions/Topics/Activities

30 Minute Moment Performances (1-2 minute performance, 5 minutes feedback)

- Liz Lerman Critical Response Process
 - Statements of Meaning
 - What did you find meaningful, evocative, startling, or exciting?
 - Questions by Performers to Class
 - Questions by Class to Performers
 - Opinions

10 Minutes Next Step Brainstorm

- 5 Min. How can we use the next 50 minutes to expand musically on the ideas we have just heard?
- Possibilities:
 - Orchestrate a song
 - Make a choral arrangement of a song
 - Extend a song through a B section or more verses
- 5 Min. Planning:
 - Instructor will take stock of the scope of suggestions.
 - If there is no consensus pick or the performances were lacking in quality/organization, *instructor takes control to develop the song performed last week at the end of class.*
 - Mix the groups into:
 - Creative Team: composing talent and writers to brainstorm a B section
 - Performers: Performers and instructor brainstorm an arrangement with performing forces
 - If there are multiple suggestions, decrease the number of groups from last session, optimally no more than two.

- From the groups whose pieces were not selected, divide up the members so that they can contribute creatively to the works to be developed.
- Try to maximize diversity of talents while optimizing efficiency

40 Minutes Development

- Students prompted with following structure:
 - *20 minutes writing, improvising, creating. Generate as much content as possible*
 - *5 minutes rehearsal*
 - *Trial Performance*
 - *10 minutes revising, refining, cut wildly*
- First 20 Min. *Instructor driven option*:
 - Creative team repeats Melody and Harmony process from previous session in 10 min./10 min. increments
 - Performing team charts the song on white/chalkboard or staff butcher paper
 - Bass line
 - Chords (Possible middle voices)
 - Melody
 - Goal for both groups in the first 20 minutes is to generate as much content as possible. Last 10 minutes would optimally be cutting
- 5 Min. rehearsal *Instructor driven option*:
 - With parts assigned to instrumentalists and vocalists, attempt a read through
- Trial run
- 10 Minutes revising, refining, cutting
 - Possible problems:
 - Multiple vocals too distracting from solo vocal line
 - Can vocals be added to just the chorus?
 - Available instrumentation detracts from accompaniment
 - Can it double the vocal line?
 - Solo prior to the beginning of the song?

10 Minutes Group Performances and Feedback (1-2 m performance, 3 m feedback)

- Liz Lerman Critical Response Process
 - Statements of Meaning
 - What did you find meaningful, evocative, startling, or exciting?
 - Questions by Performers to Class
 - Questions by Class to Performers
 - Opinions

Lesson Plan Day 11: “Ogre” Libretto

Learning Goals

Students will plan a 20 minute rehearsal based on a specific artistic need of the ensemble.
Students will infuse their activities with their unique perspectives in relation to the hunch.
Students will explore thematic content in relation to the hunch and fundamental theatrical elements.

Materials

1.5 Hrs.
Space to move
Piano (for moments)
Movement clothing
To be determined by “Ogre”

Possible Activities

Libretto

- Required reading: “Playwriting on your feet” pp. 62-71 of *improv! A Handbook for the Actor*⁹⁰
 - Who/Character
 - Where/Setting
 - When/Time
 - What/Plot
 - Why/Motivation
 - How/Action
- Option 1: Neutral Scenes / Six Scenes⁹¹
 - 6 Minutes Neutral Scenes:
 - The group splits into pairs and is provided a single text with no information about who or where. The text is short and is easily memorized. Performers can take their time deciding on character and scene, but may not deviate from the written text. A sample text is provided in the handbook.
 - 10 Minutes Six Scenes
 - Establish a scene and have two performers improvise a short scene with ten lines of dialogue.
 - Repeat the scene with the same dialogue six times. Each time, change either:
 - Who they are
 - Where they are
 - When the scene takes place

87. Atkins, 62-71.

88. Ibid, 72-75.

- Why they are there
 - What is going on
 - How the scene is resolved
 - Try to remain as true to the scene as possible
- Option 2: Where are we? / This is your life
 - 10 Minutes Where Are We?
 - A performer enters the stage and uses only mimed actions to show where they are.
 - As the class identifies the setting, another performer enters the stage and makes the scene more specific.
 - As a variation, dialogue may be included, but the performers may not reference where they are.
 - 10 Minutes This is Your Life
 - One performer sits center stage
 - One by one the other performers approach the character and initiate a scene from the character's life, then are tagged out by another performer who begins an entirely new scene.
 - The scenes do not need to be chronological.
- Option 3: Beginning-Middle-End / Storytelling
 - 5-10 Minute Beginning-Middle-End (Groups of six)
 - Two performers establish a who/what/where in a scene.
 - Ogre calls freeze and performers are replaced by new performers who continue the scene, providing conflict or development.
 - Ogre calls freeze and the final two performers conclude the scene.
 - 10-15 Minute Storytelling
 - One performer assumes the role of storyteller and makes up a story
 - As they mention characters and scenery, the performers portray them.
 - Variation 1: One performer joins the storyteller in creating sound effects
 - Variation 2: A small team of performers join the storyteller and provide a soundtrack
- Option 4: Choose your own activity or a variation of the above activities
 - Prepare a scene for performers to rehearse and workshop
 - Have performers write a story or scene based on a prompt related to the hunch

Lesson Plan Day 12: “Ogre” Composer Unit

Learning Goals

Students will plan a 20 minute rehearsal based on a specific artistic need of the ensemble.
Students will infuse their activities with their unique perspectives in relation to the hunch.
Students will explore musical content in relation to the hunch and fundamental musical elements

Materials

1.5 Hrs.
Space to move
Piano (for moments)

Possible Activities

Composer

- Option 1: 20 Minutes Compose a piece related to the hunch to be rehearsed and performed by the ensemble.
- Option 2:
 - 5 Minutes **You Sing, We Follow**
 - As large group as warm up, or in smaller groups
 - 15 Minutes **Whale song**⁹²
 - “Communities of whales know who's in their community because they all share the same song. They swim around the sea singing it. Often little variations come in. When a whale hears a community member singing a variation they like, they pick it up. In that way, by the end of a season often a whole community will be singing an entirely different song to the song they started with, but they will all still be singing the same song as one another.
 - One person is the conductor. They divide singers into parts and make up a part for each part group.
 - Once each performer has been given their part, they can stick to it, copy someone else, or can sing something entirely different. The only idea really is to keep fitting with the whole sound. (It can be fitting to take it somewhere new).
- Option 3: 20-30 Minute Songwriting Activity
 - Provide a recording of a chord progression and/or ostinato accompaniment prior to rehearsal. As homework, ask performers to sing an assigned or self-selected text to your provided accompaniment.
 - In class, develop the performances by adding more performing forces, creating a staged scene, or creating a contrasting section.
- Option 4: Choose your own activity or a variation of the above activities.

89. Greenhill, 1.

Lesson Plan Day 13 and Day 14: “Ogre” Performer

Learning Goals

Students will plan a 20 minute rehearsal based on a specific artistic need of the ensemble.
Students will infuse their activities with their unique perspectives in relation to the hunch.
Students will explore their music and expressive capabilities as performers

Materials

2 x 1.5 Hrs.
Space to move
Piano (for moments)
To be determined by “Ogre”

Possible Activities

Performer

- Instrument/Vocal Profile
 - On staff paper, map out the areas of your instrument/voice
 - Range: Highest and Lowest Notes
 - Passaggi
 - Different areas of your instrument
 - Least favorite
 - Favorite
 - Details
 - Notate three exercises you perform beautifully that set yourself up well for performance. Perform them for the class.
 - Choose a short excerpt, not necessarily related to the hunch, which shows off your strengths as a performer.
 - Bring a short text that is particularly meaningful to you in relation to the hunch
- 15 Minutes 3 Students Perform per class period
- 45 Minutes After their performance, each performer as “Sub-Ogre” splits into workshop sessions with 3 other collaborators to create a thirty-second performance featuring their instrument.
 - Although the performer as “Sub-Ogre” has creative control, they should remember to say “yes” to suggestions and see where it leads them.
- 15 Minutes Performances and Liz Lerman Critical Response Session

Lesson Plan Day 15 and Day 17: “Ogre” Stage/Music Director

Learning Goals

Students will plan a 20 minute rehearsal based on a specific artistic need of the ensemble.
Students will infuse their activities with their unique perspectives in relation to the hunch.
Students will explore their musical and expressive capabilities as an ensemble under a new perspective

Materials

2 x 1.5 Hrs.
Space to move
Piano (for moments)
To be determined by “Ogre”

Possible Activities

10 Minutes Moment performances and Liz Lerman Critical Response

Stage Director

- Choose an existing moment over which you would like to have complete artistic control for 20 Minutes
- Choose one of seven compositional elements⁹³ on which to focus for 20 minutes
 - **Concept** – Craft a concept statement for the moment, “a brief series of actions that illustrate or embody the concept.”⁹⁴
 - For example, to illustrate how food represents culture, the concept could consist of schoolchildren unpacking lunch and the Caucasian-American digging into her PB&J, the Costa Rican boy into his gallo pinto, and the Korean girl into her bulgogi.
 - After that, craft an *opening statement*: “a brief sequence that pulls in the audience by including the major elements, setting the atmosphere, foreshadowing the conflict, and pointing to the concept of the piece.”⁹⁵
 - (This is an extremely effective exercise for the YouTube trailer midterm. If not completed here, this activity will be repeated in the individual moment rehearsals)
 - **Logic** – Pick the moment apart for elements that don’t make sense.
 - Ask, “What is the next logical step? Where is this headed?”
 - **Atmosphere** – introduce or play with the following elements to see what influence they have on the direction of the moment:

90. Kerrigan, 48.

91. Ibid, 49.

92. Ibid.

- Feeling, mood, quality, color, time, tone, weather, light, temperature, and weight
- **Structure** – Construct or alter plot, musical form, or movement to influence the moment
- **Statement** – Take the necessary time to outline exactly what the moment means.
- **Audience** – The mission of the ensemble depends on the audience. Get to know your audience with respect to the hunch.
- **Design in Space and Time** – Play with the effects of shapes, movement, and time with respect to the moment.

Music Director

- Choose an existing moment over which you would like to have complete musical control for 20 Minutes
- Choose one of seven compositional elements⁹⁶ on which to focus a 20 minute rehearsal
 - **Concept** – Craft a musical statement for the moment in a brief series of musical gestures that illustrate or embody the musical concept.
 - After that, craft or select an *opening statement*: “a brief sequence that pulls in the audience by including the major elements, setting the atmosphere, [building tension], and pointing to the concept of the piece.”⁹⁷
 - (This is an extremely effective exercise for the YouTube trailer midterm. If not completed here, this activity will be repeated in the individual moment rehearsals)
 - **Logic** – Pick the music of the moment apart for elements that don’t fit or don’t make sense.
 - Ask, “What is the next logical step? Where is this headed?”
 - **Atmosphere** – introduce or play with the following elements to see what influence they have on the direction of the moment:
 - Feeling, mood, timbre, time, tone, light, tempo, instrumentation, and weight
 - **Structure** – Construct or alter musical form to influence the moment
 - **Audience** – The mission of the ensemble depends on the audience. Get to know your audience musically with respect to the hunch.
 - **Design in Space and Time** – Play with the effects of shapes, movement, and time with respect to the moment.

93. Kerrigan, 48.

94. Ibid.

Evaluation Devising Midterm – YouTube Trailer

Learning Goals

Students will learn to collaborate based on the skills of their group
Students will transfer live performance skills to a recorded medium
Students will experiment with audio and video recording methods
Students will experiment with audio and video production methods

Materials

At least one 1-2 Minute Prepared “Moment”
Sound proofed rehearsal space
Video/Audio Recording Device of current mobile recording standard
Video finishing program: iMovies or Adobe Premiere Pro
YouTube Profile

Assignment:

For your midterm you will be creating a video trailer for your final project performances which will be open to the public. Complete duration will be 60-90s. The video will be prepared outside of class and should include: music and textual content from one or more of your developed Moments; at least two different visual cuts from your camera or mobile device; and information for the performance date presented in text form at the end of the video. Video recorders can be checked out from the library, but a recent generation smart phone in good condition will be considered sufficient recording quality.

The trailer should be entertaining and engaging and should present the spirit of the eventual work while remaining open-ended enough for possible changes and development. Videos should be uploaded to YouTube ([iMovie instructions](#)/[Adobe Instructions](#)), set to unlisted, and shared with the instructor by Sunday 10/23 at 11:59 pm.

Rubric – Self-Assessment

	5	4	3	2	1
Contribution Self-Assessment	Consistently engaged in developing and pursuing group goals		Engaged with occasional prompting		Only contributed when prompted
Group Contribution Assessment	Consistently engaged in developing and pursuing group goals		Engaged with occasional prompting		Only contributed when urged to do so
Audio Quality	Recorded performance is polished, audio quality is not distracting with limited background noise		Recorded performance needs polishing, audio quality could have been improved with more preparation, or background noise is distracting		Recorded performance is sloppy, audio quality and background noise detract further
Video Quality and Editing	Recorded performance is polished, transitions are clean, and camerawork is not distracting		Recorded performance needs polishing, transitions could be improved, or camerawork is distracting		Recorded performance is sloppy, transitions are jarring, and camerawork is distracting
Content	Music and text is included from developed moment, two camera cuts are included, and information for the performances is presented at the conclusion of the video		Music and/or text are not convincingly connected to the work developed in class, video is performed in one continuous cut, performance information not presented adequately		Multiple elements are missing

Rubric – Instructor-Assessment

	5	4	3	2	1
Contribution Self-Assessment	Consistently engaged in developing and pursuing group goals		Engaged with occasional prompting		Only contributed when prompted
Group Contribution Assessment	Consistently engaged in developing and pursuing group goals		Engaged with occasional prompting		Only contributed when urged to do so
Audio Quality	Recorded performance is polished, audio quality is not distracting with limited background noise		Recorded performance needs polishing, audio quality could have been improved with more preparation, or background noise is distracting		Recorded performance is sloppy, audio quality and background noise detract further
Video Quality and Editing	Recorded performance is polished, transitions are clean, and camerawork is not distracting		Recorded performance needs polishing, transitions could be improved, or camerawork is distracting		Recorded performance is sloppy, transitions are jarring, and camerawork is distracting
Content	Music and text is included from developed moment, two camera cuts are included, and information for the performances is presented at the conclusion of the video		Music and/or text are not convincingly connected to the work developed in class, video is performed in one continuous cut, performance information not presented adequately		Multiple elements are missing

Evaluation Final Devised Performance

Learning Goals

Students will learn to collaborate based on the skills of their group
Students will delegate production, leadership, and performance tasks
Students will organize their own rehearsal schedule outside of class

Materials

Groups of five students (or similar size based on class composition)
Diverse artistic specializations
Black box performing space with room for 20-30 audience members
Basic technical equipment: soundboard, speakers, lighting board, lights

Assignment:

For your final project, you will create a live performance using your Moments developed in class and inspired from the original hunch. The performance will incorporate live music, sung and spoken word, and movement. The performance must be at least 8 minutes long but may not exceed 12 minutes. It must contain

- Sound and silence including
 - 20 seconds of silence
 - 30 seconds of instrumental music
- Choreographed movement including
 - Movement in unison
 - A repeated gesture
 - An interesting use of space
 - 20 seconds of stillness
- Melodic and harmonic ideas, including
 - Vocal harmony
 - Spontaneous improvised song or music
 - A moment of virtuosity
- Thematic ideas, such as
 - A reveal
 - Intimacy and then its opposite
 - An object

Consider how you can use those “ingredients” without looking like your piece is checking off the boxes. How can you use them to deepen your work?

Rubric Self-Assessment

	5	4	3	2	1
Contribution Self-Assessment	Consistently engaged in developing and pursuing group goals		Engaged with occasional prompting		Only contributed when prompted
Group Contribution Assessment	Consistently engaged in developing and pursuing group goals		Engaged with occasional prompting		Only contributed when urged to do so
Professionalism	Performance is polished and well-rehearsed with a high production level		Performance could use more rehearsal. Stumbles are handled with improvisatory flair. Production elements could have used more preparation.		Performance lacks polish. Production elements are missing or unprofessional and distracting.
Hunch Relevance	Performance engages with and transcends the original questions presented in the Hunch, the audience is left with fascinating questions they didn't have when they enter the room		Performance is loosely connected to the hunch, yet takes an interesting direction		Performance lacks artistic direction
Content	All required "ingredients" are incorporated seamlessly to deepen the performance		The required elements are included, but their use is sometimes distracting		Multiple elements are missing

Rubric Instructor-Assessment

	5	4	3	2	1
Contribution Self-Assessment	Consistently engaged in developing and pursuing group goals		Engaged with occasional prompting		Only contributed when prompted
Group Contribution Assessment	Consistently engaged in developing and pursuing group goals		Engaged with occasional prompting		Only contributed when urged to do so
Professionalism	Performance is polished and well-rehearsed with a high production level		Performance could use more rehearsal. Stumbles are handled with improvisatory flair. Production elements could have used more preparation.		Performance lacks polish. Production elements are missing or unprofessional and distracting.
Hunch Relevance	Performance engages with and transcends the original questions presented in the Hunch, the audience is left with fascinating questions they didn't have when they enter the room		Performance is loosely connected to the hunch, yet takes an interesting direction		Performance lacks artistic direction
Content	All required "ingredients" are incorporated seamlessly to deepen the performance		The required elements are included, but their use is sometimes distracting		Multiple elements are missing

Appendix: Application of a Devising Curriculum

For the last five months I have been working as a public school teacher at an Oberschule just outside of Berlin. Due to an extreme teacher shortage in Berlin and Brandenburg, the state allows school districts the flexibility to hire individuals without teacher certification who display equivalent real-world experience.⁹⁸ I was hired at short notice to teach music and physics to 7th-10th grade students between the ages of 12 and 16. The school system in Germany is unique in that children are separated into collegiate and non-collegiate tracks at the age of nine/ten years old in fourth grade. The college bound children are sent to Gymnasium where they experience a rigorous college-prep education focused on passing the Abitur, a test which is required for entry into German universities. The other students have a variety of options available to them, most of which are vocationally oriented. My school is a fairly unique step somewhere in between those two options, in that students take an exam in the 10th grade that allows for late entry into a college preparatory Gymnasium.

I came into a fairly dysfunctional school environment, with mutual tension between administration, teachers, parents, and students. I was hired primarily to take over for the music teacher, who is retiring in March, though the flexibility of my physics degree was attractive to the school as well. Music is a required course in Germany, but in most schools it would be comparable to a combination of music appreciation, music history, and music theory. At my school, the music teacher, a pianist, has taught there for over thirty years. The only music theory component of her curriculum is a notation unit in the eighth grade. 7th and 8th grade could be described generally as music appreciation courses with units like “Instruments of the Orchestra”

89. Deutsche Welle. "Germany faces significant elementary school teacher shortage: study | News | DW | 31.01.2018." DW.COM. January 31, 2018. Accessed February 11, 2018. <http://www.dw.com/en/germany-faces-significant-elementary-school-teacher-shortage-study/a-42375846>.

and “Song Genres” while 9th and 10th graders handle the baroque, classical, and romantic eras of classical music (“sometimes we have time to talk about jazz”). The teacher generally works on one song at a time with each class, transposing the melodies so that they are appropriate for the female voice, but unfortunately she has no solution for the catastrophe of puberty that is the male voice in 7th-10th grade. As a result, the male half of each class generally chants along or doesn’t sing at all while half of the female students mouth the words as well. Because students are forced to sing in a required class, singing in public is extremely uncool. Although there is a “choir” after school club when I first arrived, two students were registered. I took over a keyboard club with about eight students. There is a theater club taught by another teacher with about eight students enrolled. In addition to my music courses, I teach three physics classes and three “performing arts” classes in the 7th, 9th, and 10th grade. These performing arts classes, for which there was no provided curriculum, seemed a perfect opportunity to try out the methods outlined in this dissertation.

As outlined in the lesson plans, my basic curriculum outline for a performing arts class was to introduce theatrical and musical improvisatory techniques, have students develop those improvisations into increasingly longer forms, and finally form a body of content into a larger performance. I quickly had to shift course as I encountered my student population of pubescent teenagers testing their new linguistically challenged instructor.

Each performing arts class consists of two consecutive 45-minute class period with a ten minute break once a week. My ninth graders met Wednesday afternoon, tenth graders Thursday, and seventh graders Friday. In my first classes with the students I learned from the ninth and tenth graders that the performing arts curriculum in past years had been led by the art teacher and music teacher and had been almost exclusively an additional art class. In my first week, I

encountered consistent resistance to planned theatrical and musical tasks. I realized quickly that my students are essentially uncomfortable with most creative tasks, especially when those tasks are public. However, they struggle even when the tasks are private: for example, choosing a song that is connected to a strong memory and writing down the memory. Instead of providing students activities requiring a large amount of creative freedom, I have attempted in subsequent lessons to provide as clear a structure as possible while asking them to push their creative boundaries.

Where the first lessons took place in the large multi-purpose room for the entire 90 minutes, I then shifted to using a normal classroom with media and Smartboard for the first 45 minutes. In the first 45 minutes, I would essentially give as engaging of a performing arts lesson as possible (What is Performing Arts? Hip Hop, Movie Music, Film, etc.) and then a follow up activity for the second half of the course. Following the Hip Hop lesson, I asked the students to form four person groups in which one person was responsible for a beat, one for a musical ostinato, one for a rap, and one for graffiti of the rap's title. As the simplest option, they were allowed to rap the lyrics to a children song. A second option was to change the lyrics of a rap from a well-known German rapper. As a last option, they could write their own text.

One female student in my ninth grade class is actually a dancer but generally refuses to participate in class. During this class she was especially problematic and I didn't handle it well, eventually sending her out of the room. I spent the entire class period going from group to group pulling them along from step to step. None of the boys in a group of three wanted to rap, but one eventually gave in extremely reluctantly, rapping the lyrics to an American folk song from their music textbook. A group of four girls altered the words to the rap I had presented in the lesson. Because the group didn't have any true rehearsal skills and I was going

group to group, the rap was performed without a good sense of rhythm, but the performer had taken pains with the written lyrics. The final group performed an extremely simple German folk song to a beat and piano ostinato that one of the students hummed for me.

As the end of the semester approached, I attempted a longer project. After a forty-five minute lesson on effective short films (mostly viral YouTube videos and effective advertisements) the students were given the task to brainstorm, storyboard, script, and film their own 1-2 minute film. The duration of the project was four weeks. The students used the first day for brainstorming, the second day for scriptwriting and storyboarding, the third day for filming, and the final day for finishing touches and editing. The most successful group was a tenth-grade group whose members were part of the cooking club and made a completely self-directed baking video. They came late to the process, planned the entire video themselves and executed their plan with basically zero oversight. Other success stories were a group who admittedly completed the basic requirements outlined in the assignment (1-2 minutes, inclusion of a musical score, at least two video cuts) and did a video tour of the school grounds with no spoken text. A pair of boys executed an effective 2 minute horror short with some complicated cuts. The most ambitious storyline was attempted by a larger ninth-grade group that had trouble delegating tasks and needed more instructor supervision which I wasn't able to provide with my split attention. We eventually used the final day of filming and editing as a class to assist them in completing their film. Another tenth-grade group did not make progress when I wasn't actively pushing them toward creative decisions and backtracked whenever I left them to work on their next step.

My original stated goal for the course was to treat a performing arts curriculum as a skill-based course, the value of performance being to “create unique works of art that fulfill a diverse group of participants and audience members in a diverse community.” I intended to use

performance as a motivation to explore the underlying concepts of collaboration, composition, improvisation, effective rehearsal methods, and musical skills while exploring effective tactics like leadership and collaboration, time management, delegation, and letting your own idea die. My biggest shift came from the realization that performance and even the creative process were not only ineffective motivators, but rather sources of dread for many of the students in my classes. As I reflect on my lesson planning for the second half of my semester, I would say that I have focused on performance as an avenue to “Allow students to explore themes that are important to them in a safe environment.” Unfortunately, the environment among peers at the school (and most junior high environments) is such that public performance isn’t truly a safe place. I have cherished the moments where I have seen students engaged with their ideas and the creative process even as the final products are seldom objectively impressive.

Finally, I must address my seventh-grade performance arts class, which has been my greatest challenge as a first-year teacher. The class consists of around twenty students from different homeroom classes, and the mixture of students is particularly explosive. A primary challenge is that a subset of the class sincerely enjoys the power they have to disrupt the planned lesson. When I have made various attempts to re-channel that devious energy by giving them more agency, the class generally dissolves into chaos. A few additional students are not especially devious, but often refuse to participate. Forcing students under the threat of punishment to make art is one of the most repellant actions I feel I can take as a teacher and artist. One pair of students is actually very sweet, but extremely hyperactive, adding to the chaos in the room. The situation is clearly complicated by my language skills, in that I generally attempt to talk to my students, but they recognize that they are my equals or betters in a battle of words. The two 45-minute lessons is also a difficult challenge for 7th grade attention spans.

Suggestions I have heard from fellow teachers have been to “under no circumstances allow the students any leeway.” The retiring music teacher suggested I use my physical presence and speaking voice to intimidate the class and the problem students’ homeroom teacher suggested that the only way to control the class was through punishment and threats. All of these measures seem contrary to the nature of the creative process.

Due to these classroom-management issues, my main goal for each lesson in the past semester has been “spend 90 minutes with one another in peace.” The few successful lessons have included a high level of structure and direction, often with some alteration to the classroom composition through act of god. One lesson, due to a scheduling complication, I had half of the class in one 45-minute lesson and the other in the following 45-minutes. The “creative” activity consisted of building a YouTube playlist together based on suggestions from the class. Though not much more pedagogically sound than playing a movie for the lesson, the students at least engaged with me and their peers, suggesting music that they enjoyed, listening to unfamiliar music, and playing off of others’ choices. Another lesson resulted in me somehow being responsible for only three students, who were normally some of my most difficult. We spent our entire time in the multi-purpose room talking, sharing music, and jamming together on the piano.

Adjusting my curriculum for seventh, ninth, and tenth graders has taught me that the agency required for a devising curriculum absolutely needs to be tailored to the developmental level of the students. With adolescence being redefined by experts in psychology, some of the issues of apathy, insubordination, and sabotage could easily present themselves in an undergraduate environment. The order of assigned tasks in the curriculum is also much more important than I would have expected. Requesting a task that is beyond the creative or

collaborative abilities of your students not only requires more time than planned to bring it to completion, but often requires a follow-up activity to help develop the missing skills that caused problems. For example, after feeling as though I was dragging my students through my required assignments for over a month and a half, I sat down with them and developed a common “Vision for the Classroom” for the remainder of the semester. After the ninth-grade group struggled with time-management and delegation in the film unit, I spent a day brainstorming strategies for effective group work. After students resisted a brainstorming activity for composing their own song, in the next lesson, I simply had them sit down at keyboards and assign notes of a pentatonic scale to a poem of my choice, just so they experienced success.

Although learning from stumbling blocks along the way, the key finding is that too-difficult tasks are damaging to student self-efficacy, which is vitally important in a performing arts curriculum. My students equate performing in front of the class with being required to demonstrate a math problem in front of their peers. Many of them when faced with a creative task state, “Mr. Walker, I can’t do this. I’m not creative.” Although I am often disappointed with culture and the speed at which the students are progressing I truly believe that the only sincere way to effect change is for me to continue to show up and present the students with achievable opportunities to express themselves creatively. In my final lesson of the semester, as my students were completing a songwriting project, I used the first half of their lesson to brainstorm hunch questions in the hopes of motivating future projects. Suggested themes included Child-Parent Relationship, Student-Teacher Relationship, Ethnic and Racial Tension, Sexism, Homophobia, and Bullying. Questions that I found especially poignant were “Why are teachers so mean to students?”, “What are the fundamentals of a good parent-child relationship?”, “Why do Germans often have problems with foreigners?”, “At what point do you define an act as sexism?”, and

“Why does discrimination against homosexuals begin in elementary school?” All of these questions would serve as beautiful starting points for future projects.

To be honest, these classes fill me with the most fear as I do my planning each week. In comparison, it is incredibly easy to prepare a physics class. Regardless of the students’ disparate abilities in physics, they are trained to come to class and accept that I am going to require them to do physics. I can plan borderline engaging lesson plans and the fact that I’m not just lecturing, assigning homework, and testing is a bonus. In performing arts and music, in order to have any success providing the children with meaningful performance experiences, I first have to transform the culture. As much I would love to believe that can be accomplished quickly, I think that in order to be accomplished meaningfully, it will simply take time.

The difficulties encountered in applying this curriculum were certainly amplified by the age and capabilities of the students and my ability to communicate clearly in a second language. However, in a course that depends so strongly on the contributions of the students, it does drive home the need for an independently motivated student population, a threshold level of musical and theatrical expertise, and clearly communicated expectations and guidelines from the instructor. Collaboration can be an extremely messy undertaking. However students like mine experience shockingly low levels of agency throughout their schooling. Conservatories are not much different, in that instrumentalists and singers often graduate with an undergraduate degree having had each artistic decision carefully mapped out for them. It is in such environments, where collaborative methods can be most challenging to apply, where they can be most valuable.

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